

February 1, 2012

Committee on Ways and Means

re: Hearing on Social Security's Death Records

To Whom It May Concern:

Being a victim of identity theft, I strongly oppose fraud and identity theft! With that said, I also want to show my support for continuing making public Social Security's Death Master File. I am a professional genealogist and private investigator, the SSDI is extremely useful in my profession. Taking the SSDI away from the public and not making it accessible for genealogical or investigative purposes would literally make our research go back 100 years. Yes, there will always be criminals taking advantage of this type of information but they can find this info anyway. All they have to do is read the local newspaper or online obituaries, drive by a cemetery, or go to the county probate office where files are public record and obtain copies of whatever documents may be in a deceased's individual file such as a death certificate (which includes SSN, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, and even the address to their last residence) or petition listing the heirs and their social security numbers!

The reports you were previously given list the abuse that the public has endured due to the SSDI. Let me mention a few of the beneficial aspects of a public SSDI:

- 1) private investigation cases for civil and criminal matters
- 2) heir research for probate matters
- 3) genealogical research performed by professionals
- 4) personal family research performed by individuals
- 5) adoption research performed by individuals

There are 12,074 private investigation companies in the United States, with annual business sales of \$100M-\$500M. Include heir locaters, genealogical researchers and genealogical-based companies, and you can easily double those numbers.

I strongly urge the members of the committee NOT to remove Social Security's Death Master File from public use. Unfortunately, I believe that Chairman Sam Johnson in his effort in trying to do something good for Americans, is doing something bad. Thank you for considering my opinion in this matter.

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